

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 997

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, PINR, GR

SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON GREEK FOREIGN

MINISTRY POLITICAL DIRECTOR JOHN TZOUNIS

1. AMBASSADOR TZOUNIS, 54, IS POLITICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND REGARDED AS ONE OF GREECE'S MOST ABLE DIPLOMATS. HE RETURNED TO ATHENS EARLY LAST YEAR TO BECOME DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS. AS NUMBER THREE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HE HAS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED DURING THE PAST YEAR IN NEGOTIATIONNS WITH U.S. OFFICIALS ON SUCH BILATERAL ISSUES AS HOMEPORTING AND THE SOUDA BAY AIR BASE, AND WE HAVE ALSO WORKED CLOSELY WITH HIM ON THE CYPRUS MATTER.

2. TZOUNIS SERVED AS GREEK AMBASSADOR IN ANKARA FROM 1969 TO 1974 AND BEFORE THAT HE WAS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION WHICH HANDLES RELATIONS WITH CYPRUS AND TURKEY. HE IS NOW CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S BEST CYPRUS/TURKEY "HANDS."

3. TZOUNIS JOINED THE GREEK DIPLOMATIC SERVICE IN 1947. HIS ASSIGNMENTS HAVE INCLUDED SAN FRANCISCO, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW AND LONDON. HE HAS ALSO ATTENDED UNGA SESSIONS AS A MEMBER OF THE GREEK DELEGATION, IN THE EARLY 1950'S AND AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER 1974.

4. TZOUNIS IS A GRADUATE OF THE ATHENS UNIVERSITY
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LAW SCHOOL. HE IS MARRIED TO THE FORMER ELENI BEZZI,

WHO LIKE HER HUSBAND SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH, FRENCH AND ROMANIAN (TZOUNIS WAS BORN IN BUCHAREST). THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS BROTHER (AN OFFICIAL WITH SHELL OIL) OWN A YACH, AND SAILING AND PHOTOGRAPHY ARE HIS HOBBIES.

5. COMMENT: TZOUNIS IS A WARM, ENGAGING PERSON WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR, HIS WIT OFTEN BEING CYNICAL. HE CAN BE CANDID AND EARNEST. WHILE HE CONTINUED TO SERVE GREECE IN SENIOR DIPLOMATIC POSTS DURING THE SEVEN YEARS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT HE DID SO WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM AND WAS DISCRETELY BUT SHARPLY CRITICAL OF JUNTA POLICIES AND PERSONALITIES WITH TRUSTED FRIENDS. HE AMONG THE BEST-DISPOSED OF GREEK DIPLOMATS TOWARD THE UNITED STATES, HAVING ENJOYED HIS LONG SERVICE THERE AND HAVING MADE NUMEROUS AMERICAN FRIENDS. HE HAS BEEN CLOSE PERSONALLY AS WELL AS PROFESSIONALLY TO FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS OVER THE YEARS AND IN TERMS OF INFLUENCE ON SUBSTANTIVE DECISIONS UNQUESTIONABLY PLAYS A GREATER ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEK POSITIONS THAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER VARVITSIOTIS WHO IS A SUCCESSFUL POLITICIAN BUT RELATIVELY UNTESTED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

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